

# Little League park is pounded by storm

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"We could hear the roar."

So said one of eight men who was forced to take shelter against a concession stand's south wall in the Little League ballpark at 16th and Chase streets Friday night as the fury of the elements howled overhead.

When the sheets of rain abated about 25 minutes later, they ventured outside to find the park in a mess and future league games in doubt.

Three light poles were knocked over, each containing a bank of eight to 10 lights. The dugout was damaged so much that it is considered unsafe for the boys to use. The fence was damaged in three areas. The handrail along the bleachers was dented when one of the light poles fell. Some paneling was ripped off the roof of the press box.

Preliminary estimates put the damage at \$8,000 to \$10,000. "What we'll do from here, the Lord only knows," said John Gilmour, president of the Terre Haute Little League and one of the eight men who emerged unscathed from the elements. "The ballpark doesn't make

that much in a season. Even if insurance pays for half, we still can't do it."

Minor, major and T-ball league schedules are expected to be fouled up by the lack of lights for nighttime play. "We can try moving games up an hour, but then parents won't be able to see their kids play," said Darrell Hayes, a member of the board of directors.

The second game Friday night was cancelled because of the weather. Gilmour said that while he and seven other men were talking at the park, he spotted full trash bags fly around the side of the building four feet off the ground and slam into the fence.

Gilmour, who has studied meteorology, told the men to get down on the floor at the south side of the building. When the west side bulged in and then out from the storm's fury, one man who was concerned about his family in a car outside headed for the door; he was nearly sucked outside by the force of the winds.

"Eight people were praying in there," Gilmour said. "We just missed a touchdown. We were very fortunate everything didn't cave in on us in the concession stand."

In 45 seconds the raging winds passed, but not before the damage was done.